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Press Release

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Keep air conditioning installation use safe and secure

HEIDELBERG, Germany – If weather during the last couple months is any indicator, residents of Germany can look forward to another long, hot summer in Europe.

Accordingly, many people – especially new arrivals accustomed to the creature comforts of U.S. housing – are considering the purchase and installation of air conditioners to beat the heat in their government-owned or leased housing.

Installation Management Command-Europe wants all residents to be aware of specific guidance concerning responsible and safe installation and operation of AC units in government quarters.

First and foremost: Only floor-mounted units with a flexible hose are authorized for use. Residents are prohibited from installing any window-mounted air conditioners because of the risk of them becoming a falling hazard, and the fact that German-style windows are not designed to handle them.

Furthermore, floor-mounted air conditioners that have fan coils are also not authorized due to the risk of electrical shock, particularly to children. Occupants who install these types of air conditioning units must remove them. People failing to do so are subject to a safety violation citation.

Some post housing has not undergone housing modernization and lack upgraded electrical systems. Therefore they cannot sustain the electrical loads of modern, larger AC units. To ensure the safety of all building occupants, residents must seek approval from their respective garrison directorate of public works for any portable A/C units (floor units) that exceed a power rating of 1,500 watts (most popular models of portable air conditioning units, whether purchased on or off post, usually have a rated cooling capacity of 3,500 watts).

Use of extension cords is also prohibited because of the potential fire hazard they pose. Air conditioners must only be positioned so that they plug directly into a fixed outlet.

While using approved and properly-installed portable AC units, residents are also responsible for the following:

- Installing and maintaining the unit, along with any costs associated with removing it and restoring the windows to their original condition.
- Paying to repair any damages to the building resulting from AC installation, use or removal.
- Buying Plexiglas or plywood needed to fill the gap in open windows where vents are used. Cutting and fitting such material to fit the space left when a window remains in the full open position. Cutting a hole or slot into the material to snug-fit a flexible hose in without damaging the window screen.
- Ensuring no ventilation holes are punched in walls for exhaust pipes.
- Removing AC window vent when the air conditioning season ends.
- Not connecting more than one unit without contacting the garrison DPW.

As mentioned, approval to install a portable air conditioner in government quarters is not required if its capacity does not exceed 1,500 watts – and has a flexible vent pipe.

Finally, given it is estimated that the U.S. government incurs an average cost of \$10/day for each unit in operation, residents are urged to be good stewards of the environment by applying responsible energy conservation practices in the use of their units.

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Cutline:

Kristi Kimmel, a Kaiserslautern, Germany, military community member, hooks up her European air conditioner, keeping in mind that the hose must be hung out a window so that water can be regularly drained. (Photo by Christine June)

The U.S. Army Installation Management Command, Europe Region (IMCOM-Europe) is one of six regional offices created Oct. 24, 2006, (formerly known as Installation Management Agency) as part of an Army-wide initiative to focus management of Army installations around the world under one organization. IMCOM-Europe is responsible for all facets of support for U.S. Army Soldiers and families in Europe from drivers' licenses to child care to force protection. As the landlord for all U.S. Army facilities in Europe, IMCOM-Europe is responsible for infrastructure and continuing the Army's strong commitment to environmental protection. Its higher headquarters is located in Arlington, Va.